

Public Comments

Ken Spahn, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today on behalf of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. I am Ken Spahn, Senior Manager in the Port Authority's Port Commerce Department.

The New York/New Jersey harbor has significant and diverse vessel traffic. The waterways are shared by commercial vessels, recreational boaters, commuter ferries, tour boats and government vessels. Almost 5,300 commercial vessels called here last year. The Port is the nation's third largest in terms of cargo volume and the largest container port on the Atlantic. Our harbor handles the greatest volume of petroleum product in the country and is the principal supplier of fuels for the Northeastern states. This is a busy port where navigation safety is taken very seriously. And as a general proposition we support Federal programs that enhance the safe navigation of our waterways. Channel depths in this port estuary are used to their limit. Even as the Corps of Engineers is completing a major navigation improvement project we are preparing for continuing channel construction as part of the largest Federal navigation project in the country. Making the most efficient use of the land and water infrastructure is an imperative in international commerce. Federal navigation services provided by the National Ocean Service and the US Guard, especially real-time information, are essential to the safe and expeditious transit of the harbor.

One program that is particularly valuable to us is the Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System of PORTS, which has been in this harbor since installed by NOAA as a pilot in 1994. PORTS provides the real-time information that allows the vessel operators to better navigate the channels. It enables the larger of cargo vessels to make maximum use of the available channel depth. The channel construction that I mentioned earlier can alter the strength and direction of currents in unknown ways. Having that information in real-time gives pilots greater confidence in navigating areas under construction. And as you know, PORTS is an important tool in responding to spills and other threats to the coast and marine resources. PORTS will also be used in conjunction with integrated air gap technology, which is currently being installed on the Bayonne Bridge and soon to be installed on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. These sensors are vital to the safe passage of the new and larger class container vessels and cruise ships under bridges that were built when ships weren't as tall in the water.

The data provided by the hydrographic surveying and observation programs – which NOAA calls the backbone of IOOS – are vital to the prevention of accidents and groundings, which can result in injuries, loss of life, and spills that harm the estuary, not to mention significant negative economic impact to the region and the nation. As presented today, the Federal government's plan to expand and integrate ocean-observing systems will provide extremely valuable information with a wide range of benefits. However, that worthy objective should be coordinated – regionally and nationally – with

the daily need for accurate information for the maritime sector, the principal user of the Federal services.

Members of the maritime sector, including the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, have been active in promoting navigation and safety programs with this and prior Administrations and Congress. The expertise and hands-on experience of the stakeholders can provide invaluable assistance to Ocean.US and the regional associations in preparing the integrated system envisioned by NOAA. By partnering with the maritime industry, the academic and research institutions that have taken the lead in developing the IOOS regional associations will be better able to understand what systems are necessary for a pilot to navigate a 6,000 TEU vessel to safe berth here and in most any port in this country. I am pleased to note that the Port Authority has existing relationships with academic and research institutions that are involved in the development of IOOS in our region. We look forward to working with them on this project.

As we understand it, NOAA and Ocean.US envision a large, integrated system that by definition will require a major investment of Federal funds. I will conclude by saying that even as that investment is being made, it will be important that NOAA's budget, as presented to Congress, include strong continued funding for PORTS and the other navigation programs on which the maritime sector relies. That should include funding for the operation and maintenance of PORTS installations, funding that to date this Port Authority, working with the States of New York and New Jersey, has provided. The PORTS equipment is part of the Federal system on which IOOS will be built. Lacking that funding, the PORTS system would cease to operate. The non-Federal agencies should not be expected to keep the Federal system in operation, as we have been asked to do each year. When you go to Congress for funding, NOAA and Ocean.US should be sure to incorporate those costs into the costs of the integrated system. We will work hard to ensure that the NOAA navigation programs are fully funded. We expect the Federal agencies to do the same.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Jeff Keever, Hampton Roads Maritime Association

I express disappointment in the process that has led us to today. The backbone is very well-thought out with positive implications for our industry. Earlier today was a comment that ultimately IOOS will cost \$750M annually – 80% will be covered by federal. I object to the maritime industry being asked to fund 20%. The maritime industry should have a representative on staff of Ocean.US.

**Ed Kelly,
Maritime Association of the Port of New York and New Jersey**

The Maritime Association of New York and New Jersey fully endorses comments by Mr. Keever.

**Fred Grassle
Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Rutgers University**

While we're talking about the backbone and enhancements of the backbone, I'd like to call your attention to the Ocean.US Report #7 called Surface Current Mapping in US Coastal Waters.

We haven't talked much about the importance of the high frequency radar as a part of the coastal IOOS backbone.

I'd also like to mention a pilot project with the Coast Guard on search and rescue. The high frequency radar system for the entire continental shelf from below Delaware Bay up to Martha's Vineyard is being evaluated using the Coast Guard's algorithms for search and rescue.

Public Comments
Helen Brohl,
National Association of Maritime Organizations (NAMO)

I don't have prepared comments. I appreciated the comments regarding the Ocean Commission Report and the IOOS mandate. Commercial maritime needs to be taken into consideration and we need to protect the maritime sector. Environmental stewardship can only be done if we provide safe, navigable waterways. What is trade if not movement from one place to another? U.S. ports are integral to trade.

We have come a huge way since June 9th at the Coalition meeting, and we still have miles to go to get the word out to the rest of the community. We have a hard time getting \$3M yet its value is extraordinary. But it is clear that the Congress does not want to fund it – it is a program where industry pays and NOAA provides oversight.

We appreciate that others are reaching out – we are supportive of that. Woods Hole and GOMOOS will be working together. I want to emphasize commercial navigation. Congress made it clear that the National Ocean Research Leadership Council should remember commercial navigation. We can't forget there is already another emphasis in the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act. NOAA should maintain real-time hydrographic data. Congress should determine the level of appropriations. It is not for government to decide to fund – it has already been mandated through legislation. It is already authorized for real-time systems. We always imagined it would be more than maritime – a real-time PORTS system.

As Dr. Grassle said at the hearing, he indicated that he realized we have to reach out. IOOS seems awfully big – it may or may not happen. We have a bird in the hand with the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act. We have a way to create a system that is national and can support a number of users.

NAMO has been active and successful in supporting increased funding for navigation services. We don't want to forget that NOAA also has charting and mapping services – it's part of the backbone as well.

We appreciate NOAA's representatives Dr. Spinrad, Margaret Davidson, Mike Szabados and their staff convening this meeting to bridge the gap.

Final thing is about the PORTS concept vs. IOOS. We sometimes feel steamrolled. I had a meeting with the House Science Subcommittee staffer. I said I would think you would be supportive of PORTS now that it's a backbone of IOOS. While we talk about the backbone, folks up there in Congress don't hear the backbone thing. They don't understand what it really meant. It is important in for everyone to understand there is an information gap.